

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DETECTING CARDIAC REPOLARIZATION ABNORMALITY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to methods and apparatus for detecting cardiac repolarization abnormality.

[0002] Cardiac repolarization abnormality can be indicative of heart disease. In some cases, such as long QT syndrome, sudden cardiac death can be the first visible sign of such disease. Accordingly, cardiac repolarization has been studied to find a correlation between an electrocardiogram signal and an underlying heart disease of a patient. Conventional cardiac repolarization analyses often focus on the QT interval and/or the polarity of the T-wave.

[0003] Unfortunately, the cardiac repolarization process is very complex and thus the resulting portions of the electrocardiogram signal can be difficult to analyze. For example, it can be difficult to determine whether a change in the T-wave is due to onset of heart disease, due to alternative placement on the patient of the surface electrodes used to obtain the electrocardiogram signal, and/or due to noise (e.g., muscle noise). Interval analyses are limited in the detection of such changes and their sources. Also, measurement error of T-wave offset can affect both the sensitivity and the specificity of a particular application.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In one embodiment the invention can provide a method of detecting cardiac repolarization abnormality using at least one electrocardiogram signal. The method can include determining a total quantity of representative beats of the at least one electrocardiogram signal, using at least one morphology shape descriptor to determine a total quantity of values representing the total quantity of representative beats, and using data corresponding to at least some of the values of the total quantity of values to assess cardiac repolarization abnormality.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating a cardiac monitoring system according to the invention.

[0006] FIG. 2 illustrates an electrocardiogram signal.

[0007] FIG. 3 is a flow chart illustrating one embodiment of a method of the invention.

[0008] FIG. 4 illustrates a decomposition of a matrix data using a principal component analysis.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0009] Before any embodiments of the invention are explained in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the following drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limited. The use of “including,” “comprising” or “having” and variations thereof herein is meant to encompass the items listed thereafter and equivalents thereof as well as additional items. The terms “mounted,” “connected” and “coupled” are used broadly and encompass both direct and indirect mounting, connecting and coupling. Further, “connected” and “coupled” are not restricted to physical or mechanical connections or couplings, and can include electrical connections or couplings, whether direct or indirect.

[0010] In addition, it should be understood that embodiments of the invention include both hardware and software components or modules that, for purposes of discussion, may be illustrated and described as if the majority of the components were implemented solely in software. However, one of ordinary skill in the art, and based on a reading of this detailed description, would recognize that, in at least one embodiment, the software based aspects of the invention may be implemented in hardware. As such, it should be noted that a plurality of hardware and software based devices, as well as a plurality of different structural components may be utilized to implement the invention.

[0011] FIG. 1 illustrates a cardiac monitoring system 10 according to some embodiments of the invention. The cardiac monitoring system 10 can acquire electrocardiogram (ECG) data, can process the acquired ECG data to assess cardiac repolarization abnormalities, and can output data to a suitable output device (e.g., a display, a printer, and the like).

[0012] The cardiac monitoring system 10 can acquire ECG data using a data acquisition module. It should be understood that ECG data can be acquired from other sources (e.g., from storage in a memory device or a hospital information system). The data acquisition module can be coupled to a patient by an array of sensors or transducers which may include, for example, electrodes coupled to the patient for obtaining an ECG signal. In the illustrated embodiment, the electrodes can include a right arm electrode RA; a left arm electrode LA; chest electrodes V1, V2, V3, V4, V5 and V6; a right leg electrode RL; and a left electrode leg LL for acquiring a standard twelve-lead, ten-electrode ECG. In other embodiments, alternative configurations of sensors or transducers (e.g., less than ten electrodes, or with extra leads such as is utilized in a fifteen lead system) can be used to acquire a standard or non-standard ECG signal.

[0013] A representative ECG signal is schematically illustrated in FIG 2. The ECG signal can include N beats including beat-one B_1 through beat-N B_N where N is a value greater than one. The ECG signal can include continuous and/or non-continuous beats B.

[0014] The data acquisition module can include filtering and digitization components for producing digitized ECG data representing the ECG signal. In some embodiments, the ECG data can be filtered using low pass and baseline wander removal filters to remove high frequency noise and low frequency artifacts. The ECG data can, in some embodiments, be filtered by removing arrhythmic beats from the ECG data and by eliminating noisy beats from the ECG data.

[0015] The cardiac monitoring system 10 can include a processor and a memory associated with the processor. The processor can execute a software program stored in the memory to perform a method of the invention as illustrated in FIG. 3. FIG. 3 is a flow chart of a method of the invention used to detect cardiac repolarization abnormality using at least one ECG signal. Although the cardiac monitoring system 10 is described herein as including a single processor that executes a single software program, it should be understood that the system can include multiple processors, memories, and/or software programs. Further, the method of the invention illustrated in FIG. 3 can be performed manually or using other systems.

[0016] As shown in FIG. 3, the processor can receive (at 100) ECG data representing an ECG signal. The acquired ECG data can be received (e.g., from a patient in real-time via the

data acquisition module, from storage in a memory device, remotely through a network) and can be processed as necessary. The ECG data can represent continuous and/or non-continuous beats of the ECG signal. For example, in some embodiments, the ECG signal can be obtained during a single time window (e.g., a ten to twenty second time window), while in other embodiments, the ECG signal can be obtained during multiple time windows. Further, the ECG data can represent one or more ECG signals (e.g., a first ECG signal obtained a first day, a second ECG signal obtained a second day, and so on).

[0017] The processor can determine (at 102) a quantity of representative beats using the ECG data. To facilitate determination of the representative beats, the ECG data, or a portion thereof, can be parsed into a plurality of data sets. Each data set can represent a portion of a respective beat B of the ECG signal (e.g., the T-wave portion of a respective beat B of the ECG signal), a portion of a respective odd or even median beat of the ECG signal, a portion of a respective odd or even mean beat of the ECG signal, a portion of each lead of the ECG signal, and the like. The parsed data sets can be saved in an array (e.g., a waveform array). In other embodiments, the ECG data can be saved in a single data set, or alternatively, saved in multiple data sets.

[0018] As shown in FIG. 3, the processor can use at least one morphology shape descriptor 104 to determine (at 106) a quantity of values representing the representative beats. The morphology shape descriptor can include many different designs. A number of example designs of morphology shape descriptors are described below.

[0019] In one embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using at least one morphology feature of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to the representative beat. In some embodiments, the data set can directly correspond to the representative beat. In other embodiments, the data set can indirectly correspond to the representative beat (e.g., the data set can correspond to a first derivative of the representative beat, an integration of the representative beat, and the like). The morphology feature can include, for example:

- a maximum morphology feature (e.g., a maximum value of a data set corresponding to a representative beat);
- a minimum morphology feature (e.g., a minimum value of a data set corresponding to a representative beat);

- an area morphology feature (e.g., an area between a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat and a baseline established by a minimum value of the data set, an area between a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat and a baseline established by a maximum value of the data set and a point of the data set representing a maximum up-slope of the curve, an area between a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat and a baseline established by a minimum value of the data set and a point of the data set representing a maximum down-slope of the curve, an area between a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat and a baseline established by a point of the data set representing a maximum up-slope of the curve and a point of the data set representing a maximum down-slope of the curve, and the like);
- an amplitude morphology feature (e.g., an amplitude of a point representing a maximum up-slope of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to the representative beat, an amplitude of a point representing a maximum down-slope of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat, a ST-wave amplitude, a T-wave peak amplitude, a T-wave valley amplitude, a U-wave peak amplitude, and the like);
- a slope morphology feature (e.g., a maximum up-slope of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat, a maximum down-slope of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to a representative beat, a maximum T-wave up-slope, a maximum T-wave down slope, and the like);
- a time interval morphology feature (e.g., a time interval between a maximum value and a minimum value of a data set corresponding to a representative beat);
- a ratio morphology feature (e.g., a ST:T ratio); and
- any combination thereof.

In some embodiments, values generated using the morphology features can be placed in a matrix for further processing. In one embodiment, a matrix can be generated that includes rows that represent the leads of an ECG signal and columns that represent morphology features of the representative beats corresponding to each lead.

[0020] In another embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using results of a principal component analysis (PCA)

performed on a matrix of data A (FIG. 4) having data corresponding to one or more representative beats (e.g., beats representative of twelve leads of an ECG signal). In some embodiments, the matrix of data A can include values determined using at least some of the above noted morphology features.

[0021] PCA involves a multivariate mathematical procedure known as an eigen analysis which rotates the data to maximize the explained variance of the matrix of data A (i.e., a set of correlated variables are transformed into a set of uncorrelated variables which are ordered by reducing variability, the uncorrelated variables being linear combinations of the original variables). The PCA decomposes the matrix of data A into three matrices as illustrated in FIG. 4. The three matrices include a matrix U, a matrix S, and a matrix V. The matrix U includes the principal component vectors (e.g., the first principal component vector u_1 , the second principal component vector u_2 , ..., the pth principal component vector u_p). The principal component vectors are also known as eigen vectors. In the illustrated embodiment, the first principal component vector u_1 represents the most dominant variance vector, the second principal component vector u_2 represents the second most dominant variance vector, and so on. The S Matrix includes the principal components (e.g., the first principal component S_1 , the second principal component S_2 , ..., the pth principal component S_p). The first principal component S_1 accounts for as much of the variability in the data as possible, and each succeeding principal component S accounts for as much of the remaining variability as possible. The matrix V is generally known as the parameter matrix. The matrix V is raised to a power of T.

[0022] In one embodiment, the first principal component vector u_1 , the second principal component vector u_2 , and the third principal component vector u_3 can be utilized as a dipolar shape descriptor, and the fourth principal component vector u_4 , the fifth principal component vector u_5 , and the sixth principal component vector u_6 can be utilized as a non-dipolar shape descriptor. In other embodiments, the results of the PCA can be used alternatively to describe the representative beats.

[0023] In another embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using results of a wavelet analysis. A wavelet analysis is a transform that provides a time-frequency representation of a set of data. In one embodiment, a discrete wavelet analysis is performed on the first principal component vector u_1 , the second principal component vector u_2 , the third principal component vector u_3 , the fourth

principal component vector u_4 , and the fifth principal component vector u_5 , which were obtained by performing a PCA on multiple leads of a ST-T portion of a representative beat. A feature set can then be extracted from the first, second, and third levels of discrete wavelet transform coefficients for the principal component vectors. This step is a further generalization or feature reduction from both the PCA and wavelet analysis.

[0024] In another embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using a mathematical modeling function. The mathematical modeling function can be utilized to determine values representing a mathematical model of a curve formed by a data set corresponding to the representative beat. The mathematical modeling function may include at least one of a Gaussian function model (e.g., a two-sided Gaussian function model), a power of Cosine function model, a bell function model, and any combination thereof.

[0025] In another embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using results from a direct waveform extraction, or the cross-correlation with a template waveform, which can become auto-correlation if the template is the waveform itself. One example of a direct waveform extraction can include a neural net trained to generate various outputs when the neural net recognizes abnormalities in a data set corresponding to a representative beat. In one embodiment, the direct waveform extraction can be from a ST-T segment of either an original lead or PCA vectors.

[0026] In another embodiment, a morphology shape descriptor can be designed to describe a representative beat using standard electrocardiographic measurements and feature extraction. One example of a feature extraction can include whether the representative beat includes a concave or convex ST-T wave.

[0027] The quantity of values determined for each representative beat using the morphology shape descriptors 104 can vary. As shown in FIG. 3, the processor can use the values representing the representative beat to quantitatively assess (at 108) cardiac repolarization abnormality. In some embodiments, a single ECG analysis can be performed. In other embodiments, a serial ECG analysis or comparison can be performed. Quantitative assessment of cardiac repolarization abnormality allows for trending, which can lead to a better understanding of how heart disease affects a patient's ECG signal. This understanding can then be utilized to better predict sudden cardiac death and other cardiac related diseases.

For example, as numerous ECG signals are analyzed, threshold levels can be established for the various values representing the representative beats. When one or more threshold levels are exceeded, the patient may be a candidate for further testing.

[0028] In some embodiments, the values determined using the morphology shape descriptors can be compared with a template to determine levels and/or patterns of variation therefrom. In some embodiments, the template can be generated using one or more of the values with the combination of the above morphology descriptors. In other embodiments, the template can be formed based on preexisting data.

[0029] As an illustrative example of using a template, a first representative beat may generate a value of five units when analyzing the representative beat with a particular morphology shape descriptor, a second representative beat may generate a corresponding value of six units, a third representative beat may generate a corresponding value of four units, a fourth representative beat may generate a corresponding value of ten units, and so on. The first, second, third, and fourth representative beats may represent beats from a single ECG signal or beats from four separate ECG signals (e.g., ECG signals periodically taken over a year span). If the template is derived using a single value, the template can have a value of five units. In other embodiment, the template can be more complex. When the second representative beat is compared to the template, an absolute difference of one unit results, when the third representative beat is compared to the template, an absolute difference of one unit results, and when the fourth representative beat is compared to the template, an absolute difference of five units results. Each of these variations can then be compared to a threshold value to determine if the threshold is exceeded. If the threshold value is three units of variance, then the first and second representative beats do not exceed the threshold but the third representative beat does exceed the threshold. This out-of-range variation can be cause for further testing of the patient. In some embodiments, a determination that further testing is necessary may depend on the type of out-of-range variation and/or the existence of other out of range variations.

[0030] In some embodiments, the template can be adaptively adjusted based on the variation from the template during a time series analysis. Many different techniques can be used to adjust and refine the templates. For example, in one embodiment, the template is adjusted based on a small percentage of the variation resulting from each comparison. Such adjustment can be especially beneficial in long-term trending studies where other variables

may be changing that affect the values being compared with the template, for example, the changing due to heart rate and activity status (e.g., sleep versus wake-up).

[0031] In some embodiments, the values can be normalized prior to comparison to the template. Such normalization may be especially necessary, for example, if the values represent beats of ECG signals, which were not obtained using the same set of electrodes. ECGs obtained from a patient can vary based on placement of electrodes on the patient. Many normalization techniques can be used to normalize the values. For example, in one embodiment, the values can be normalized based on the QRS deflection of the representative beat.

[0032] In some embodiments, the method of the invention can allow for the use of patients as their own controls in pharmaceutical testing. Use of patients as their own controls can eliminate the need for separate control groups. For example, in one embodiment, at least one ECG signal is obtained prior to delivery of the pharmaceutical drug to the patient, and at least one ECG signal is obtained during and/or after delivery of the drug to the patient. The sets of ECG data can then be statistically analyzed individually and then relative to each other to determine if a statistically significant change exists. In some embodiments, normal day-to-day variability versus statistically significant change can be measured via cluster analysis. In other embodiments, alternative statistical analyses can be utilized. Populations of patients can be studied and separated into separate groups based on these statistical analyses.

[0033] In some embodiments, non-electrocardiogram correlates of cardiac repolarization can be utilized for purposes of further assessing cardiac repolarization abnormality. For example, in one embodiment, a patient can be tagged with measurements that do not change over time (e.g., genetic profiles). Populations of patients with similar cardiac disease can then be compared to determine if tag similarities exist, which may act as an indicator of oncoming cardiac disease. Further, in other embodiments, the patient can be tagged with measurements that do change over time (e.g., prevalence of disease, cardiac enzymes, blood pressure). As analysis reveals that the patient is developing cardiac disease, the tags can also be analyzed to determine if their values are also changing. Such analysis can lead to additional indicators or causes of the cardiac disease.

[0034] As shown in FIG. 3, the processor can display (at 110) the results of the method of the invention. The results can be displayed using any suitable output device (e.g., printer,

display, and the like). In some embodiments, editing tools can be utilized to manipulate and further analyze the results.

[0035] Various aspects of the invention are set forth in the following claims.